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ABSTRACT

The state of Kentucky has recently raised its standards for persons who apply for admission to teacher education. The plan, mandated by the State Board of Education, involves a selection/retention process for candidates who apply for initial admission to the program and for candidates who progress through the program. A minimum level of performance on multi-faceted criteria must be demonstrated by each candidate prior to initial acceptance into teacher education. The criteria include acceptable performance in basic skills, as well as evidence of appropriate professional characteristics. Candidates may be denied admission to professional teacher education, even in an open-admissions institution. This paper explains the Kentucky plan for admission to teacher education. Aggregate data describing results of the admission/retention process in Kentucky are presented to portray the quality of persons who applied for admission to teacher education as well as those who were accepted into a preparation program. In addition, data from Northern Kentucky University, an institution with five years' experience in selective admissions, is presented to show the impact of a selective admissions program upon the quality of candidates enrolled in teacher education. The impact of selective admissions upon enrollment is also presented. (JMK)

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SELECTING TEACHERS: AN EFFECTIVE MODEL

by

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Presented
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at
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of the
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for Teacher-Education

Introduction

A recent report on American schools suggested that our educational foundations were eroding in a rising tide of mediocrity. Given the number of current reports on education, one could be equally concerned that we might drown in this turbid, if not turgid, tide. Studying and critiquing American Education has resurfaced as one of our most prominent contemporary endeavors. We should welcome this attention. Schooling is important and at least part of the frustration evidenced in the myriad reports betrays an abiding faith that schools can solve much of what ails us. And, although the reports vary as to the dimensions and sources of our educational ills, many common features emerge. General concern about schooling is narrowed to concern about the curriculum, the social and economic contexts of schools and teachers. Every report expresses concern about the quality of people who teach.

Vieving teachers as an essential component of schools is reasonable and appropriate. Research findings support our personal experience which tells us that teachers figure prominently in the success or failure of schools. Recent studies of schooling have focused on who seeks to become a teacher, how teachers are selected and educated, and the conditions under which they perform their professional duties.

Kentucky is one of the states recently to raise the standards for persons who apply for admission to teacher education. The plan mandated by the State Board of Education involves a selection/retention process for candidates who apply for initial admission to the program and for candidates who progress through the program. A minimum level of performance on multi-faceted criteria must be demonstrated by each candidate prior to initial acceptance into teacher education. The criteria include acceptable performance in basic skills, as well as evidence of appropriate professional characteristics. Candidates may be denied admission to professional teacher education, even in an open-admissions institution.

* As presented to the 1934 Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education on February 3, 1984.

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This paper will explain the Kentucky plan for admission to teacher education. Aggregate data describing the results of the admission/retention process in Kentucky will be presented to portray the quality of persons who applied for admission to teacher education as well as those who were accepted into a preparation program. In addition, data from Northern Kentucky University, an institution with 5 years experience in selective admissions, will be presented to show the impact of a selective admissions program upon the quality of candidates enrolled in teacher education. The impact of selective admissions upon enrollment will also be presented.

Kentucky's Plan

In July 1981 the Kentucky State Board of Education revised the state plan for selection, admission and retention of students entering teacher education institutions. The key features of the revised plan included:

* Formal application to an Approved Program

* Academic/Professional Advisement

* Introductory Courses

* Proficiency Testing (Oral and written communication--"Three R's" at the level of the average high school senior. Also, the ACT scores were to be reported.)

* Grade Point Average (2.0 on a 4.0 scale)

* Admission/Committee/Interview (Committee must include a teacher, administrator, teacher educator, and an an academic area specialist)

* Pre-professional Experience

* Letters of Recommendation (three)

The revised plan differed from the existing plan mainly in the degree of specificity of the requirements, the initiation of proficiency testing, and the direct and active involvement of practitioners exercising their professional judgement in the admissions process.

The Kentucky Plan--First Year Results

One of the requirements of the Kentucky Plan for Selection and Admission is that an annual report must be submitted by each teacher education institution, both public and private. This report requires the institutions to submit summative data on students applying for admission to teacher education. Among the specific report requirements are: (1) tests the institution used to measure skills in basic literacy, (2) ACT scores for students

who applied for admission to teacher education, and (3) ACT scores for students who were denied admission to teacher education. The state report does not, however, reflect the scores of students who were admitted to teacher education.

The Kentucky Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (KACTE) conducted a project whereby institutions provided data in addition to that required by the State Department of Education. The data reported in this section will reflect information from both of these sources.

A review of Table 1 shows that 79 percent of the applicants to teacher education programs were actually admitted. It should be pointed out that most Kentucky institutions admit students to teacher education in the sophomore year or at the beginning of the junior year. Many institutions also have requirements to continue in the program. An example of this requirement is a progressive increase in the grade point average requirement up to the point of student teaching. Therefore, it should be emphasized that some of the 79 percent admitted to the program will later be denied permission to continue in the program. Conversely, some of the 21 percent who were denied initial admission to the program will be admitted to the program later. At present, there is no state requirement to track students who have been admitted to the program to determine the characteristics of students who actually graduate from the program. This deficiency should be addressed by either the State Department of Education or the KACTE since an accurate databank is necessary in this age of teacher education accountability.

Table 1

Commonwealth of Kentucky *
Students Admitted/Denied Admission
1982-83

	Elementary	Secondary	Total
Number of Applicants	1073	862	1935
Admitted	872	666	1538
Denied Admission	201	194	395
Percent Admitted	81	77	79

* 17 of 23 institutions reporting

Grade point average is one of the quality checks of prospective teachers in Kentucky. Table 2 presents an analysis of the grade point average for all teacher education applicants, those admitted to teacher education, and those denied admission to

teacher education. This table also presentes grade point averages by elementary and secondary education majors (admitted and denied). Grade point average for teacher education candidates admitted to teacher education are significantly higher than non-teacher education students in the universities and colleges. A significant point is that the predominace of courses taken by teacher education students at this point in their program are not education courses. Most teacher education institutions in Kentucky require 40-45 semester hours of general education, a significant amount of which is taken in the freshman and sophomore years prior to application for admission to teacher education.

Table 2

Commonwealth of Kentucky
Grade Point Average
1982-83

Applicants--Teacher Education Program	2.90
Admitted to Teacher Education Program	3.00
Denied Admission	2.49
Elementary	
Admitted	3.01
Denied	2.47
Secondary	
Admitted	2.99
Denied	2.51

Elementary education majors have a slightly higher grade point average (3.01 based on a 4.00 scale) than secondary education majors (2.99). There is a significant difference, however, in the grade point average of students admitted to teacher education versus those denied admission (3.00 vs. 2.49).

Table 3 presents a more detailed analysis of the grade point average of students admitted to teacher education. It can be concluded that teacher education candidates are better students as measured by grade point average at the point of admission to the program.

Table 3

Commonwealth of Kentucky
G.P.A. Distribution
1982-83

G.P.A.	Admitted	Percent of Total Admitted	Percent of Total Not Admitted
3.50--4.00	294	19.2	6.5
3.00--3.49	461	30.0	14.3
2.75--2.99	261	17.0	7.8
2.50--2.74	262	17.1	14.0
2.20--2.49	226	14.7	24.2
Less than 2.20	30	2.0	33.2

ACT Scores

The Kentucky Plan for Selection and Admission to teacher education does not require a specific ACT score for admission to teacher education. Several proposals have been made in recent years to establish a minimum composite score. However, the Plan does require the institutions to report ACT scores for students who apply for admission to the program. Unfortunately, since 1982-83 was the first year for this requirement, ACT scores were available for only 69 percent of the applicants for admission to teacher education. Undoubtedly, this number will increase in ensuing years.

Table 4 shows the distribution of ACT scores for students admitted to the program, as well as for those students who were denied admission to teacher education. Scores reported in Table 4 are divided into national quartiles. Despite the fact that the U.S. Department of Education reports that teachers come from the bottom quartile on standardized tests, Kentucky has only 18.4 percent of its prospective teachers coming from the bottom quartile (14 and below on the ACT). The mean ACT score for persons admitted to teacher education is 19.1, higher than the national average. We can conclude, therefore, that teacher candidates in Kentucky are slightly above average as evidenced by the ACT test.

Table 4

Commonwealth of Kentucky
ACT Distribution by Quartile
1982-83

Composite ACT Scores	Admitted	% Admitted	% Not Admitted
24 and above	202	18.5	10.4
19--23	378	34.8	20.8
15--18	309	28.3	29.2
14 and below	200	18.4	39.6

Northern Kentucky University's Plan

The selective admissions program that has been in place at Northern Kentucky University since the Fall of 1981 meets the minimum mandates of the "Kentucky Plan" and exceeds the minimum standards in some areas.

Northern requires a 2.2 G.P.A. for admission to the Teacher Education Program compared to a 2.0 minimum in the Kentucky Plan. The standard for proficiency tests differs slightly. In addition, students are required to take an interest inventory which is used for advising and guidance purposes.

For admission to student teaching, Northern has added the requirement of a minimum of a "C" grade in mathematics courses for elementary teachers, a minimum of a "C" grade in all methods courses and approval of the major department.

The requirements listed on Charts 1 and 2 follow the "Kentucky Plan" with the aforementioned differences.

The basic guidelines have been interpreted strictly.

Chart 1

Requirements for Admission to the Teacher Education Program

1. Semester Hours Earned _____ (40 minimum)
2. Cumulative Grade Point Average _____ (2.2 minimum)
3. Reading Proficiency
4. Writing Proficiency
5. Speech Proficiency
6. Mathematics Proficiency
7. Interest Inventory
8. Admission Committee Interview
9. EDU 200 _____ (minimum grade of C)
10. EDU 290 _____ (minimum grade of C)
11. Recommendations _____ (minimum of three)
12. Pre-professional curricular experiences _____ (record on file)
13. ACT Scores _____ (record on file)

Admission to teacher education is a prerequisite for all professional education courses except EDU 200 and EDU 290.

Chart 2

Admission to Student Teaching

1. Admission to Teacher Education
2. Professional Education Grade Point Average _____ (2.5 minimum)
3. Area/Major/Minor Grade Point Average (2.5 minimum)
4. Cumulative Grade Point Average _____ (2.5 minimum)
5. Semester Hours Earned _____ (91 minimum)
6. MAT 140 and MAT 141 _____ (minimum grade of C in each)
7. All Methods courses _____ (minimum grade of C in each)
8. Professional Characteristics
9. Medical Examination
10. Good Standing
11. Two semesters in residence
12. 75% Coursework for Secondary Education Teaching Area or Major
13. 100% Coursework for Secondary Education Teaching Minor
14. 100% Coursework for Secondary Education Professional Education or
    100% Coursework for Elementary Education Major
15. Major Department Approval

Table 5

Northern Kentucky University
Fall, 1982, Spring and Fall, 1983
Students Admitted and Denied Admission

	Elementary	Secondary	Total
Number of Applicants	110	139	249
Admitted	80	89	169
Denied Admission	30	50	80
Percent Admitted	73%	64%	68%

During the three semesters the "Kentucky Plan" has been in place, Northern Kentucky University has denied admission to approximately one-third of the students applying for admission. (Students must have a 2.00 G.P.A. and 24 semester hours of credit to complete an application. Over the past three semesters seven percent of the students seeking applications were not permitted to file for admission because of failure to meet these standards.)

A slightly higher percentage of elementary majors were admitted than secondary majors (73% to 64%).

Table 6

Northern Kentucky University
G.P.A. Distribution
Fall, 1982 and Spring and Fall, 1983

G.P.A.	Admitted	Percent of Total Admitted	Percent of Total Not Admitted
3.50--4.00	22	13	3
3.00--3.49	64	38	11
2.75--2.99	36	21	18
2.50--2.74	29	17	14
2.20--2.49	18	11	25
Less than 2.20	0	0	30

Student achievement for those admitted to teacher education is markedly better than for students denied admission, 3.02 to 2.51. Fifty-one percent of the students admitted to the program had a G.P.A. of 3.00, or better, on a 4.00 scale. This compares to 49.3% for the state as a whole.

Fifty-five percent of the students who were denied admission had a G.P.A. below 2.50 while 11% of those admitted had a G.P.A. of less than 2.50.

When students are admitted to teacher education at Northern Kentucky University they have only six semester hours in "education" courses. Other coursework is in general studies. Hence, the accusation that "education students build their G.P.A.s on soft education courses" cannot be supported in this instance.

Legislation introduced in the 1984 session of the Kentucky Legislature proposes that students attain a 2.50 G.P.A. to be admitted to teacher education and a 2.75 G.P.A. to student teach. Using the 2.50 cut-off Northern Kentucky University would have lost 11 percent of the students admitted to the program. Statewide, 16.7 percent of the students admitted would have been denied admission by this standard.

Table 7

Northern Kentucky University
ACT Distribution by Quartiles
Fall, 1982, Spring and Fall, 1983

Composite ACT Scores	Admitted	Percent of Total Admitted	Percent of Total Not Admitted
24 and above	38	22	13
19 - 23	66	39	24
15 - 18	45	27	29
14 and below	20	12	31

Students actually admitted to teacher education at Northern Kentucky University during the three semesters the "Kentucky Plan" has been in place show a mean ACT of 20.0. This compares to a mean ACT of 17.3 for students denied admission and a mean ACT of 17.2 for high school seniors anticipating education as a major in 1981.

Table 7, above shows that 12 percent of the students admitted had an ACT in the bottom quartile of the distribution compared to 22 percent in the top quartile. Sixty-one percent of the students admitted were in the top two quartiles, or above the 50th percentile of the distribution. Fifty-three percent of the students admitted to teacher education in the Commonwealth were at this level.

We conclude that students entering the teacher education program at Northern Kentucky University under the present "Kentucky Plan" for selective admissions have a higher ACT score than the normal distribution of college bound students, and a greater percentage of these students are in the upper quartile of the distribution than in the bottom quartile (22 to 12).

The mean ACT of students entering Northern Kentucky University was 16.8 in 1978 and remained at 16.8 in 1982. The ACT of students entering teacher education has incrased from 19.5 to 20.0.

Table 8

Northern Kentucky University
Student Profile
1982-83
(Three Semesters)

	Admitted	Denied
EDU 200 (mean G.P.A.)	3.12	2.20
Age	24.5	22.4
Cumulative G.P.A.	3.02	2.51
ACT	20.0	17.3

The profile of the "typical," or average student admitted to teacher education at Northern Kentucky University reflects a student who is slightly older than the student denied admission. The "typical" student has a higher G.P.A. (3.02 to 2.51) and a higher ACT score (20.0 to 17.3). In addition, the "typical"

student who was admitted achieved approximately one letter grade higher in the Introduction to Education course than did their counterpart who was denied admission.

The "typical" student admitted to teacher education at Northern Kentucky University is a mature student with a 3.02 G.P.A., an ACT of 20.0 and a "B" in Introduction to Education. This is hardly the profile of a student scraped from the bottom of the academic barrel.

Table 9

Northern Kentucky Univeristy
Introduction to Education
Enrollment, 1978-1984

Years	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Enrollment	154	131	132	106	141	169

Enrollment

Enrollment in Introduction to Educaticn declined after the Fall of 1978 until the Fall of 1982 when it partially rebounded to 74. In the Fall of 1983 enrollment hit an all-time high. The enrollments in the Spring Semester of 1983 and 84 are the highest in the past six years.

This increase coincides with the implementation of the "Kentucky Plan" in the Fall Semester, 1982. The higher standards have not impacted enrollment to this point. However, the standards under the "Kentucky Plan" were not significantly higher than those in place at Northern Kentucky University since 1978.

Conclusion and Issues

Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education have been attacked in many quarters as offering programs of questionable rigor and value to students who are among the least able to perform academic tasks. Althcugh we have not dealt with quality of teacher education curricula and instruction, our experience is that the question of student quality can be responded to rather well. An admissions program can be instituted which selects students who demonstrate proficiency in "basic skills" and who are above average in terms of grade point average and performance on standardized tests. And, although it is ironic that no clear correlation exists between these criteria and teaching

effectiveness, the image of the profession can be improved and the extreme cases of illiteracy among teachers can be limited. Furthermore, the first years of experience of Northern Kentucky University with selective admissions is that student retention is higher and fewer students are "selected out" in student teaching.

The issues and questions raised by selective admissions as we have described it should haunt even the most zealous proponent of "excellence" in teacher education. The first issue is that of teacher supply and demand. If selective admissions significantly reduces our already dwindling supply of teachers, will the country respond by allowing individuals to circumvent teacher education? Although enrollment at Northern Kentucky University appears relatively strong, many factors may account for recent increases. Such developments as increased student recruitment, generalized demand (jobs), and financial incentives (loans and scholarships) for prospective teachers may mean that the days of declining enrollments are ending. But, once again, emergency or alternative certification plans could bring us back to an era from which many would say we have not yet recovered.

Certainly the validity of our criteria and processes are subject to question. Are we indeed selecting the best candidates for the profession? Are we restricting access to the profession by minorities? How can we develop more comprehensive and adequate professional judgement models which enable us to be reasonably comfortable with our decisions? Can we serve as courageous, humane, and wise gatekeepers? The related issue of remediation and reassessment for admission arises here as well. The move to exit examinations and the use of standardized tests (NTE) for certification raises these questions to an even higher level of significance. The added costs to plan, deliver, and evaluate selective admissions programs must be considered as well.

Finally, if by selectively admitting students we are indeed affecting student quality, our prepartion programs should be revised accordingly. If our students are more academically able and if they demonstrate some level of sophistication with respect to dealing with schools, our curriculum and instruction ought to be re-examined and possibly changed. Perhaps through this process of re-examination and change we could begin to respond to those who not only criticize the quality of our students, but the quality of education we offer them.